



**Montana Department of Corrections**  
**FACT SHEET**  
***Lewistown Infirmary: Practical solution***  
***to a growing problem***

### Background

- Montana's male prison population continues to age more rapidly than Montanans in general.
  - The average age of Montana's population increased by 9½ months between 2006 and 2011
  - The average of Montana's male inmates increased by 39½ months in that same time.
- Montana State Prison maintains a full-service infirmary to care for almost 1,500 inmates.
- In 2010, Montana State Prison identified 490 inmates with 939 chronic diseases. In 2012, the prison has 500 inmates with 1,067 chronic illnesses.
- Chronic ailments among inmates include hypertension, diabetes, pulmonary disease, heart and artery disease, high cholesterol, thyroid problems and seizures.
- Many of these inmates are confined to wheelchairs, need help standing or walking, require oxygen and need assistance in performing routine daily activities such as dressing toileting and bathing.
- The 2011 Legislature authorized spending \$2.9 million to develop 20 special needs beds and up to 100 additional general population prison beds.
- The number of additional general population beds would be contingent on how much the special-needs beds cost.
- The Department of Corrections estimated at the time the cost of a special needed facility might be \$31,000 per bed, but emphasized that the true price would not be known until it developed and received responses to a specific proposal.

### The problem

- The elderly inmates with myriad medical and physical issues drain the security and health-care resources at Montana State Prison. They are vulnerable to abuse by other inmates.
- Many of these offenders are not eligible for release or placement in a community setting.
  - If eligible for release, they would qualify for a nursing-home type of facility
  - They are unable to develop an acceptable parole plan because of limited, if any, family support and due to reluctance of community nursing homes to accept offenders with such crimes.
- Because providing these inmates with adequate care is a challenge, they represent the greatest potential for litigation regarding their care.
- Most of the prison's housing units are not designed to accommodate inmates with severe chronic illnesses and disabilities.

(over)

### **What the infirmary does**

- Uses a renovated and separate wing of the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center that includes secure and unbreakable windows, sally ports, cameras, 12-foot perimeter fence, 24/7 security and nursing staffs
- Provides secure housing for up to 25 special needs inmates from Montana State Prison
- Employs up to 36 staff, including a nine correctional officers
- Houses inmates ranging in age from 43 to 81, with an average age of 61
- Allows Montana State Prison to backfill the 25 vacated beds there with 35 inmates because of the reduced need for single-inmate cells.
- Addresses any potential concerns about adequacy of care for the most infirm of inmates.
- Preserves the security necessary for prison inmates.
- Adds \$1.7 million in annual payroll and benefits to the Lewistown area
- Complies with the legislative directive for provision of special needs beds, but does so without incurring debt service on a new building or duplicating services already available in conjunction with an existing state facility.

### **The issue**

Did the Architecture and Engineering Division of the Department of Administration, absent legislative approval, have the authority to use Department of Public Health and Human Services money to renovate a portion of the care center to accommodate the infirmary?

- The Department of Administration concluded that the expenditure was done appropriately and that additional legislative approval was not needed to use the money for the purpose for which it was appropriated in 2007.